



# The Nineteenth Amendment and Women’s Suffrage Part 6: Impacts Beyond the Supreme Court

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This Legal Sidebar is the last in a six-part series that discusses the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which recognized women’s voting rights. Shortly before Election Day 2022, a group of people [gathered in Rochester, New York](#), to honor the late social reformer and women’s rights activist, Susan B. Anthony. About 150 years earlier, Anthony [cast a ballot](#) in the 1872 presidential election. She was arrested and charged with illegally voting as a woman in violation of federal law. She unsuccessfully claimed that the [Fourteenth Amendment](#) gave her the right to vote as a privilege of citizenship. A federal district court [imposed a fine](#) of \$100 on Anthony, but she never paid it. As the nation marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Anthony’s vote—and the 2020 centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment’s ratification—Congress may be interested in the history and impact of the women’s suffrage movement and the Nineteenth Amendment. Additional information on this topic will be published in the [Constitution Annotated: Analysis and Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution](#).

Although the Supreme Court has not decided many cases interpreting the Nineteenth Amendment, the Constitution’s recognition of women’s suffrage has had a significant impact throughout society. As the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg [noted](#) at an event celebrating the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment’s ratification, the Amendment “was the first step toward equal-citizenship stature for women” in the political and civil spheres of public life.

In the political domain, the Nineteenth Amendment [changed voter demographics](#) by adding millions of potential female voters to the electorate. As a result, many women immediately acquired a direct role in choosing their elected leaders and representatives for the first time. Nonetheless, many African American women and other female minority groups throughout the United States [continued to face significant obstacles](#) to voting after the Nineteenth Amendment’s ratification.

Another visible legacy of the Nineteenth Amendment has been an increase in the number of women holding public office. As a result of the suffrage movement, the Nineteenth Amendment, and other societal developments, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries witnessed a number of electoral “firsts” for women. These included [Jeannette Rankin’s](#) 1916 election to the House of Representatives; [Hattie Wyatt Caraway’s](#) 1932 election to the Senate; [Nancy Pelosi’s](#) 2007 election as Speaker of the House; and

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[Kamala Harris's](#) 2020 election to the vice presidency. At the beginning of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress in January 2021, a [record number](#) of 151 women took office, accounting for about 28% of Congress's total membership.

In addition to increasing women's involvement in politics, the Nineteenth Amendment helped to increase women's participation in other domains of public life. For example, during the twentieth century, women increasingly served on juries, pursued higher education, and entered the professional workforce in the United States. Nonetheless, despite progress on women's rights issues, some advocates, such as the National Woman's Party, [continued to campaign](#) for the removal of all "existing sex distinctions" from the law. These advocates sought an amendment to the Constitution that would have guaranteed full legal equality between women and men. This proposed [Equal Rights Amendment \(ERA\)](#) was ultimately unsuccessful; however, efforts to obtain an ERA received [new attention](#) during the 2020 centennial celebration of the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification.

## Author Information

Brandon J. Murrill  
Legislative Attorney

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